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IT CAME TO PASS

ARTHUR W. MOULTON

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It Came To Pass

Arthur W. Moulton

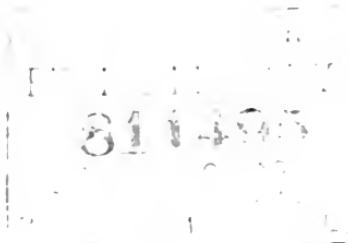


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TO
THE CONGREGATION OF
GRACE CHURCH,
LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

1888
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PREFACE

THE Gospels abound in dramatic situations. These may be developed with the aid of the imagination and such development may perhaps help in the study of the great Narratives. There is no attempt made here at dramatic writing, although I feel quite sure that the Gospels would be brought into closer contact with human life if they could be studied, as it were, in action. No one can read the simple Accounts of our Blessed Lord's Life without feeling the stimulus to better living on his part. Nor can one meditate upon incidents which are mentioned so naturally and so simply by the Evangelists without wondering about the setting of them.

I have developed six situations, in the hope that it may lead to a larger meditation on the Life Which is so abundant in Its powers of direction.

ACROSS THE TABLE

*Zaccheus stood forth and said unto the Lord,
Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give
to the poor and if I have done any wrong
to any man I restore fourfold.*

ACROSS THE TABLE

ZACCHEUS sprang to his feet. He could stand it no longer. Something about this Guest of his gripped his conscience. His sweet face, what He was saying, the conversation with its drift and direction were holding Zaccheus by the soul. Zaccheus was rich—and despised. He accumulated his fortune by collecting the taxes for the Roman Government. That was the reason why he was hated. Much that was collected never found its way into the Roman treasury.

Zaccheus was little of stature and dwelt in Jericho, where, on the highway to Jerusalem, he had his office and place of business.

One day Jesus passed over this road on the way to the Holy City. His journey was marked by generous gifts of healing and He was surrounded by throngs of people. As far as one could see, the road was black with cheering humanity. Upon inquiry, Zaccheus learned that Jesus was coming that way and would pass his place. The Publican had

heard many strange things about the Man of Galilee, but had never happened to see Him.

Here was an opportunity which he was determined he would not lose. He left, therefore, his post of collection—I doubt if he stopped to put things away—and ran out into the road. Zaccheus saw at once that he would have no chance to see in the dense crowd, so he hurried on ahead to find a vantage point—a camel by the wayside—an old water jug—a vender's cart—anything to stand on, but he could discover nothing. There was nothing for it therefore but to take advantage of the trees that lined the street. Just ahead of him was a handy one—a sycamore with a bending bough within his reach; at least if he jumped he could fetch it. It was worth the try and Zaccheus, the rich, the despised, envied Zaccheus, ran and leaped for it, caught it and pulled himself up, and, clinging there, saw Jesus in spite of the multitude that was accompanying Him.

Jesus saw Zaccheus too. He stopped for a moment. He spoke to the Publican. Here was a man who was making an earnest en-

deavor to see Jesus: why should not Jesus give him an opportunity to see Him at closer range?

And so the penniless Galilean spoke to the rich Publican:

“Hurry, Zaccheus, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.”

It was a gracious entrance into the hated man’s environment and Zaccheus appreciated its significance.

Dwight L. Moody says that somewhere between the tree bough and the ground, Zaccheus was converted. Possibly. It is likely, however, that, in that dinner hour, as, across the table, Jesus and Zaccheus looked into each other’s eyes, as they talked face to face, Master and man in close contact, that the hated sinner took in the fuller meaning of the Redeemer and rose to His transforming power. Listen:

ACROSS THE TABLE

Jesus.—Wast thou not fearful, Zaccheus, for a man of thy years to climb into that sycamore?

Zaccheus.—Nay, Master, I never thought of any risk: I loved that sort of thing when I was a boy.

Jesus.—But, Zaccheus, didst not thou hear the people laugh when they caught sight of thee?

Zaccheus.—Ah, Jesus, I did not care: it was only Thee whom I saw and heard. For many days I have longed to see Thee and hear Thy voice. My servants gave me news of what Thou didst to the old blind man and weeks ago a pilgrim told me some of the things Thou saidst upon the hill of Hattin.

Jesus.—Zaccheus, I saw thee before thou reached the sycamore, I saw thee in thy office at thy desk, I saw thee bending over thy table: it seemed to me that thou wast counting pieces of gold and silver.

Zaccheus.—It was so, Master.

Jesus.—And I beheld thee as thou rannest from the room, ahead of the multitude—whom didst thou leave that gold with?

Zaccheus.—Alas, Lord, I clean forgot about it—I will send the servants to put it into the boxes.—Here is a famous morsel the slave has brought.

Jesus.—*Zaccheus*, doth Cæsar furnish thee with all these servants?

Zaccheus.—Nay, Jesus, I hire them myself.

Jesus.—For thyself, *Zaccheus*! I thought thou wast a government official. How canst thou with what the emperor allows thee have this great retinue of servants?

Zaccheus.—Why, canst Thou not see, Rabbi?—I gather all Cæsar's taxes from the people here.

Jesus.—Yea, but when thou sendest them to Cæsar, they are for Cæsar.

Zaccheus.—I know, but, Master, I do not send it all to Cæsar.

Jesus.—Oh——!

Zaccheus.—No, Rabbi, thou seest—the emperor requires it not: he requires of me

only a share, only the real tax, only what he levies upon the people—the rest is mine.

Jesus.—What rest, Zaccheus? I do not understand—

Zaccheus.—Why, the Emperor allows me all I can collect above the tax—Master, *that* is mine; and over this vast area there are many people and each year I gather a large sum.

Jesus.—All for thyself, Zaccheus?

Zaccheus.—Yea, Lord.

Jesus.—Thy friends must love this home of thine.

Zaccheus.—Nay, 'tis long since any friend hath sat at table with me—hath looked upon my treasures here: I know not why—they do not come.

Jesus.—Tell me, Zaccheus, where didst thou purchase that Grecian figure by the mirror? 'Tis a wonderful work of spirit.

Zaccheus.—That, Master? Oh, that I was forced to take from a householder who could not pay my charge. It sometimes happens so:—that mirror itself of rare Etruscan art came from one who owned a vineyard.

Jesus.—He must have loved thee well to give it thee.

Zaccheus.—Nay, Jesus, he gave it not.

Jesus.—Oh, *Zaccheus*—*Zaccheus*, friend of mine, who is the bent and wrinkled man who held Me by the cloak and stopped Me here? His face was blanched and full of pain.

Zaccheus.—Oh, he with Bartimeus? That is the owner of the vineyard. He is full of plaint and quarrel, he worries over much about his daughter.

Jesus.—His daughter, *Zaccheus*?

Zaccheus.—Yea—since he lost his vines a prince of the royal house has proffered him money for the maiden.

Jesus.—*Zaccheus*!!!

Zaccheus.—I know, Lord, but—

Jesus.—*Zaccheus*, how did the father lose his vines?

Zaccheus.—I took them, Master—I had to take them for the tax.

Jesus.—Ah—man—friend of mine!

Zaccheus.—Indeed, Rabbi, it was my right: it must needs be.—It happens often thus:

yesterday: a week agone—a month past
—a score or more the past two years.

Jesus.—Zaccheus!!!

Zaccheus.—Look, Master, look about Thee
—much of this land is mine.

Jesus.—Zaccheus, I cannot look upon it. I
see naught but that poor father's face:
that fountain dripping in thy court sounds
like his tears: the music of thy minstrels
is his child's sob to Me. It was thy right,
yes—friend of mine—these lands are
thine, these vines are thine, these houses,
farms, all are thine:—and so methinks is
every thought of hate—and so is every
curse of men.

Zaccheus.—Ah, I fear so, Rabbi.

Jesus.—And so is the prince's guilt—Nay,
Zaccheus, friend, thou canst collect thy
profit but look how thy treasure in heaven
hath dwindled, thou canst dispossess the
householders within thy province: but see
how thou art dispossessing their souls.

Zaccheus.—My Lord!

Jesus.—Ah, thou ownest their lands and be-
hold how thou hast control also of their
hearts! Thou hast enslaved their spirits,

Zaccheus, because thou hast stripped, loosened their grasp on life.

Zaccheus.—Nazarene!

Jesus.—It's true—Zaccheus, my friend. Thou sawest the multitude with me? See them—now—there—below thy windows. They love thee not—that cripple there, the son of Timeus there, those little children, do little children love thee? Friendless indeed is he whom little children cannot love. Thou hast robbed them of their future. Those women in the crowd who walk upon the street—I know not—friend of mine—but were they not honored names some years gone by? I cannot tell, but down in Nazareth where we looked out upon the hills, where from the workshop we could see the mountain and the wide, wide fields of flowers, I seem to have heard no word of gold or silver, no slave, no homeless householder, nor was there any guile or tainted life, but all was sweet and fair and free. And all was happy and strong and joyous.

Zaccheus.—Ah, Master.

Jesus.—The little children romped about the meadows, their glee, their peals of laughter were the Galilean music: the youth and maidens saw with glad faces the vision of life—

Zaccheus.—Behold, Lord—

Jesus.—Wait, Zaccheus! With glad faces they looked unhampered upon the vision of life. It was my youth, Zaccheus, the life of my boyhood, the glorious innocent life by the wonderful lake.

Zaccheus.—Behold, Lord, the half of my goods—

Jesus.—A moment, Zaccheus—It was the life of an unshackled future, an untroubled dream, boyhood, girlhood, childhood—

Zaccheus.—Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor—

Jesus.—Ah, brother—of childhood there, innocence, without which, my brother, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Life. See what it is, Zaccheus, to take all this away, to rob men of their childhood dreams, to shatter their fortunes of the spirit, to drive them from the path that leads to the Kingdom of God.

Zaccheus.—Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have done wrong to any man—

Jesus.—How splendid is thy palace! How marvellous are thy treasures, how wonderful are all these priceless works upon thy floor—they bear Me back to the boy I was—when My fancy and thy fancy too, *Zaccheus*, were wont to draw these things for us—they belonged there, did they not, belonged to innocence and guiltlessness, they were the reward of sinlessness, of the unstained artless wish: but, my brother, hath it been really so with thee?—and yet our childhood tells the truth. Thy tears—*Zaccheus*—thy servants are troubled at thy tears—they wait to drive away the multitude who throng thy doors.

Zaccheus.—Rabbi—my Lord—my Master—Galilean—Jesus—hear what I say—the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have done any wrong to any man I restore fourfold!

ON THE GALILEAN LAKE

And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him.

ON THE GALILEAN LAKE

DO you think it was the first time the sons of Zebedee had seen Jesus or heard His voice? I do not believe that the Gospel account means to imply that they were transformed into disciples in the twinkling of an eye.

This act represents a climax, not the abrupt abandonment of their father without a struggle. It is plain that James and John were giving up more than the home life with their parents. They were leaving their livelihood, their prospects, their sure business success. For long this step had been confronting them but they had held back. Since Jesus had come into their circle of acquaintance, their outlook upon life had gradually undergone a change.

They had spent quiet hours together in the Synagogue: they had roamed in happy companionship over the hills: they had talked about things great and small: they had fished with varying success but unvarying pleasure

upon the lake: they had listened mute and spellbound as Jesus told His stories and His dreams, as their Companion revealed His wonderful knowledge of other kingdoms.

Jesus had told them that some day He would go out into the world to catch the love of men. He had said that when that day should come He would need help. Would they help?

Acquaintance had grown into companionship: companionship had ripened into love: love had borne the compelling desire to go with Him whithersoever He wanted them to go.

One day, as they were fishing with their father, on the Galilean lake, James and John told Zebedee about the wish that was consuming them.

ON THE GALILEAN LAKE

James and John.—Father—hast thou seen Jesus?

Zebedee.—Jesus? The young man working in Joseph's carpenter shop?

James and John.—Yea, father.

Zebedee.—Nay, my sons, I have not closely seen Him. Simon pointed Him to me the other morn but it was too far for me to see Him well. The children of the village were about Him. Dost thou know Him?

James and John.—Yea, father, somewhat, we wish we knew Him better: may we not bring Him to thee?

Zebedee.—Certainly, my sons, but when hast thou seen Him?

James and John.—Oh, father, some of the mornings when we could not go out upon the sea we have gone into the village to His working place.

Zebedee.—They say the shop is full of men who go to see Him; why, I wonder?

James and John.—Oh, father, thou shouldst

go down, go down and see Him, go down and speak to Him and let Him speak to thee. Thou wouldst love Him, father.

Zebedee.—Perhaps, but my two sons fill my heart: I love thee and am happy.

James and John.—Ay, but, father, thou wouldst love Him too and thou wouldst be happy in His friendship.

Zebedee.—What can He bring me that my James and John do not daily bestow upon me, ye for whom I thank the Heavenly Father daily? Can He help me with the trade, can He bring to me new custom, can He show me where the fish run larger in their schools? Hath He thy strength?

James and John.—Oh, father, He is so strong: we saw Him one day shoulder a log which Joseph could not move and on the slope of Hermon only a week agone He rolled a boulder which had blocked the trail. We sailed about the lake with Him a while past and He revealed two likely spots for fish which thou must try.

Zebedee.—Indeed!

James and John.—And, father—

Zebedee.—Say on, my sons.

James and John.—Strange worth doth cling to words He speaks. He seems to see his daily tasks in close relation to the tasks of God, as if one's deeds could be translated to the deeds of God: as if about this world of ours there were a greater world. He said the other day we ought to live our lives in bigger measure.

Zebedee.—What could He mean by that, my sons?

James and John.—After the measure of God, He said; that God had wonderful plans, that we ought to be builders for God and live abundantly.

Zebedee.—I think, my sons, in time, that we shall have abundance.

James and John.—Jesus did not seem to mean that, father. He said that life in close touch with God produced a richness out of which great thoughts and deeds do spring.

Zebedee.—There may be truth in that, my sons.

James and John.—And He says that life is poor without that touch of God, that Nazareth and Capernaum are poor, that

Jerusalem is poor because they have it not.

Zebedee.—Pull the boat around, my sons, thou hast forgot thy task.

James and John.—Father, He's going to enrich those cities.

Zebedee.—The cities?

James and John.—The people in them. He says His heart is bursting with compassion: there is so much richness for them and they receive it not.

Zebedee.—How has He richness for them, pray?

James and John.—Why, father, He means faith, faith which shall show them God, faith which shall reveal them to themselves, faith which opens up the avenues of life, which strikes the depths of soul. He says that all the springs of life have been concealed or stopped by sin and only faith can cleanse away the sin.

Zebedee.—He may be right, my sons. The net drags heavily.

James and John.—Father, He said one day as we were sitting in His boat—

Zebedee.—Hath He a boat?

James and John.—Yea. One He made Himself, beautiful it is, the swiftest on the lake. He said one day as we were—

Zebedee.—Can He sail the boat, my sons?

James and John.—Ah, father, thou shouldst see Him sail into the storm. That very day there came a sudden storm down from the hills and caught us and He fetched us through—right head on through the gale, and all the time He smiled and said how safe the boat was and how splendid was the work of fishing and how human souls ought to be drawn into the life of faith.

Zebedee.—Methinks, my sons, that thou art drawn to Him.

James and John.—Oh, father, no other like Him have we ever seen.

Zebedee.—'Tis time, my sons, that we turned homeward. Some day I'll see thy friend myself.

James and John.—Father, He's going some day.

Zebedee.—Going where, my sons?

James and John.—Going from Nazareth to take the new faith to men.

Zebedee.—Will He leave Joseph and His mother?

James and John.—It is not they whom He will leave, but He will leave His work there.

Zebedee.—What! is He going to the big shops in the city?

James and John.—Nay, father, out into the world He's going, out into the world of men, to give them faith, to give them life, He says, to break the barrier down between them and God—our God, father, the God of our fathers and our father-land. Thou shouldst behold Him when He tells of the new life—thou shouldst see the glow upon His countenance, the winsome smile upon His lips, the tender light within His eyes, thou shouldst look upon His strong arms stretched out,—why—thou wouldst desire to run into them, thou wouldst believe Him, father.

Zebedee.—It seemeth to me, my lads, that ye believe in Him without a doubt.

James and John.—Ay, so we do—since that bright hour that we prayed together in the Synagogue. When Jesus prayed, dear

father, light of unwonted splendor shone before the tabernacle, so that the priest fell on his knees. 'Twas like the light of the human world. Father, we wish to go with Him.

Zebedee.—My sons, my sons, James, John—go with the Dreamer! Ye are beside yourselves!

James and John.—Nay, but He hath such a work to do.

Zebedee.—But so have ye, my sons, at home with me—ye would not leave me at my time of life, ye would not leave the fortune that is growing large—ye would not leave the home which I have built for thee—ye would not leave these days with me upon the sea—since ye were babes ye have been mine.

James and John.—Yea, father, and still we shall be thine, but since this new faith hath come to us, life seems to spring to other work; we cannot stay and dwell upon it and let it live within our hearts; we cannot hold it to ourselves alone. It brings before our eyes the men of Galilee, the men and boys of Palestine, the multitudes

within the Holy City. We want to give them this abundant treasure, strengthen their hearts and bring their souls to life.

Zebedee.—I cannot let thee go.

James and John.—Father, we must needs go—if Jesus goes, when Jesus goes. He said He needed us: we cannot tell, but we need Him. Even now as the sail fills with the breeze, it's like His strength, and as the boat swings toward the point it seems to swing toward Him: the sunlight as it falls upon the waters feels like the warmth and brightness of His words, the splash of the waves against the bow is as the call of His voice.

Zebedee.—Ah, sons of mine, remain with me.

James and John.—Nay, father, it is not that we have lost our love for thee—'tis not that we abandon thee—but life upon the lake hath shrunk, the vision of the future no longer rides before our eyes—thy fortune, father, which shall come to us, hath no attracting grace.

Zebedee.—But what hath He to give thee? Tell me.

James and John.—His own Life, to give away freely to the whole world, medicine to heal, sight, health, speech, straight limbs, faith, dear father, hope and love!

Zebedee.—Alas, my children, ye'd have me think He were as God.

James and John.—Father, He is as God: in Him the Godhead dwelleth bodily!

Zebedee.—Enough, my sons—we're near the wharf, beware the boom—let down the sail and make the landing. I'll call at Joseph's in the eventide. Stay! what's the commotion on the shore?

James and John.—Why, 'tis Jesus, father—and there is Simon and there is Andrew too. He's calling to us.

Zebedee.—Thou mayst not go, my sons!

James and John.—He calls us, father, canst thou not hear Him saying, Come? Come to the more abundant life! Come to the multitudes who wait out yonder!

Zebedee.—I—cannot—let—thee—go!

James and John.—Father, He beckons—thy blessing, for we go. He's calling—see—He's going down the pasture path: we kiss thee, father, for we go!

TEARS OF A MAN

Peter went out and wept bitterly.

TEARS OF A MAN

SIMON PETER had been a coward. His cowardice was of the basest sort. He had been afraid of his life and to save his life he had told a lie. He had bolstered up the lie with braggadocio: with cursing and profanity he had asserted that he possessed no knowledge whatever of Jesus of Nazareth.

Simon Peter feared death—the death that he knew Jesus would suffer. He feared too the ridicule of the crowd in the prætorium. He was afraid that he would be taunted with being deluded by this King Whom they had in their possession.

Simon Peter could see plainly that the Kingdom had fallen to pieces. It was evident that the dream of Israel was not to come true and that they who had dreamed with the Dreamer would be visited with their folly.

So as they stood there that morning where

Pilate and his soldiers were, Simon Peter reiterated that he knew not the Man.

Jesus heard the loud talking of His disciple. Turning around, He looked upon Peter and Peter caught that searching, piercing, absorbing, pitying look. It makes little difference whether Jesus and His trembling apostle were in the same room or not. Some say they were not near together—that Jesus could not hear Simon's lie—but that as the Master was being led away to Calvary, He turned to see if perchance Simon were near by. He saw him there and looked upon him with the old reassuring steadfast love.

Simon Peter broke down. The joys of the Ministry came flooding into his memory, the visions, dreams, sufferings together. Certainty that in spite of everything, Jesus was all He claimed to be, reasserted itself—and sobbing, crying aloud, the apostle fled from the place.

Out of the palace Peter rushed, down through the street, up a narrow lane, into a house. He made no attempt to hush his sobs or to conceal his tears. He ran stumbling up the stairs—and fell moaning and ex-

hausted through the doorway of the humble room where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews.

Startled and terrified, they crowded about the weeping man.

TEARS OF A MAN

The Apostles.—Why—it's Simon—Simon Peter!

Simon Peter.—Oh, my brothers!

The Apostles.—What—what is it, Peter?

Simon Peter.—Oh, my comrades!

The Apostles.—Speak, Simon, tell us what it is! What hast thou seen? Have they assailed thee?

Simon Peter.—Oh, Philip, James, Thomas!

The Apostles.—Thy sobs, thy trembling body—they, alas, they have wounded thee. Did we not tell thee to beware? Did we not warn thee that thou wast too daring?

Simon Peter.—Stop—do not speak—oh, men, stop!

The Apostles.—What, are they coming here? Have they found our hiding place? Then let us flee—for they will kill us if they come upon us here. Ah, if we'd only stayed in Galilee! Come, Simon, let us bind thy wounds.

Simon Peter.—Peace, brothers, hold thy peace, I am not wounded.

The Apostles.—Ah, God be thanked for that and for thy strength! Peter, that was a valiant act of thine—the way thou puttedst to flight the rabble—they fled before the blows of thy old sword—they will be careful how they come near thee.

Simon Peter.—Cease, cease! Will ye not hold your tongues before ye murder me? I pray thee be quiet.

The Apostles.—Why, Simon, brother, thy fight hath maddened thee. Nay, we rejoice to see thee once again, to have thee here. We need thee so. We know not what to do. Now dry thy tears and cease thy sobbing for we are safe again.

Simon Peter.—Oh, Andrew, brother mine, child of our poor old mother—let me weep out my life—let my soul sob itself away—let my heart drown in my tears!

The Apostles.—Simon Peter, strong one, thy words are riddles: and thy trembling—something hath unnerved thee: must we flee?

Simon Peter.—Unnerved me? Flee? I shall not stir one step! I beg these soldiers come and slay me here! Why dost

thou not ask for Jesus? Why do ye not ask me where He is? Ask and let me tell the truth! Have ye so soon forgotten Him? Think ye of nothing else than safety? Ye are no braver than myself!

The Apostles.—Thou art no coward, Peter. Thou art the boldest of us all. The Church is built on thee.

Simon Peter.—Yea, no coward I—Bold one am I—Poor Church that's built on me—Do ye poor hunted huddled hiding hirelings know what I have done?

The Apostles.—Surely some noble thing, good Peter.

Simon Peter.—Yea, a noble thing, Nathaniel! I told the soldiers that I knew not Jesus—I told a garrulous maiden that I knew Him not! That I knew not the Christ—that I knew not the Nazarene—that I had never seen the Master—that with these eyes I'd never looked upon the One with whom we've journeyed back and forth through Palestine these many days! I told them, do ye hear?

The Apostles.—Well, what of that—what if thou didst? It was to save thy life—they

would have held thee. They may kill Jesus, but thou art safe.

Simon Peter.—Yea, I am safe—at what a price! I told them with an oath I knew Him not—told Caiaphas, who's seen me with Him every day—a hundred there knew well I lied. And Jesus heard me, saw me there. I was afraid! He looked upon me and He looked so strong and gentle, so unafraid and kind! He told me once He feared I could not stand the full stress of the sacred life—that I would fall away before the blows and sneers and black approach of death. Ye remember how I answered Him—that I would die with Him and give my life for Him?

The Apostles.—Yea, Simon, but 'tis well that thou art here.

Simon Peter.—Naught can be well again with me, my brothers! I lied so! I took the name of God in vain! I lied so in His presence and swore by all that He held dear I knew Him not! Ay, I am safe and He goes fearlessly to Calvary! They'll kill Him, the Holy One, the Just—the pure, sweet life that thrilled thee so, thee, James

and Andrew; that charmed thee, Matthew, from the piles of gold; that drew me, me from a humdrum task and gave me work to do.

The Apostles.—But He said He'd rise again—that He'd break through the barriers of the grave! Cease sobbing, Peter!

Simon Peter.—What if He rise again—does that save me—does that make me a man once more—can I take back my lie, can I recall the words that left Him to Himself alone, bound, fettered, spitted on and bloodstained! I dare not see Him when He comes again!

The Apostles.—Simon—He loves thee, Simon, He loves us all. Did He not kiss us at the last Feast here: did He not speak in sweet affection? He loves thee and His love is all absorbing.

Simon Peter.—Ah, but, men, such love as that calls for response. Can Jesus send His love loose through the air? Is love a thing to scatter in the clouds? What did ye when they found us in Gethsemane?

The Apostles.—We fled and came back here. What could we do against that multitude?

Simon Peter.—Oh, an heroic band we are—this is the crown we give our king—this is the love we offer Him—this is the loyalty of Galilee! God keep the news from Zebedee and any of the men whom Jesus healed! Ah, me, could I have been a man—a real man—not strong as ye see my arms and body, that was no aid—that is not manhood all—a real man—not to waver at the sneers of men, never to falter at the jibes of men—never to tremble at the thought of death—never to shrink from taking every step! I was afraid of truth—I who never feared a living thing! Ye know I never feared a living thing—where is the man who ever frightened me—the man or beast or storm or act of God?

The Apostles.—Indeed, dear Peter, do we know it well, how many a time——

Simon Peter.—I do not care for that—that sort of strength hath no avail! The only strength of man that counts—that he can summon to his dire need, is strength to stand in every turn and twist, in every strain and stress, in crowd and solitude,

plenty and in penury, in light and dark, in triumph and defeat, close to the Master he has chosen—gripping the clear, clean truth. I have it not! I chose my Master as ye all have chosen—the dearest Master that the world hath known—the Master who is God to thee and me—the Master whom to see is to adore! I gave up all for Him, everything except—except the power, the damning power to lie! I gave up all for him and followed Him through every stony path, through want, through persecution, through starvation—up to the Hall of Caiaphas! He never had to ask for me: I ever kept me close to Him because I love Him so—until—until just now the moment that He needs me most, the moment that He calls me for my love, the moment that He cries to me for loyalty, I lied! I'd better died!

The Apostles.—Simon—Simon, brother—
Simon Peter.—Nay, do not brother me—what pleasure can ye find being my brother. I told them that I knew Him not—the words keep screaming in my ears—I hear them now leaping from my

throat, coarse, sharp, husky, terror-laden words—That Man! That Man! I tell you No! No! I never saw that Man before. I was afraid of those scourges that the lictors bore, afraid when I saw the rulers of the nation there, afraid of the nails they drive into your hands, the blood that ran down Jesus' shoulders made me fear! I lied, mean, wicked lies against Jesus, not once, not twice, but thrice, as Jesus knew I would! And then I broke away and ran, ran from the palace, ran from my lying voice, ran from the tender eyes of Jesus! Where is Iscariot? Is he coming back?—

The Apostles.—Judas is dead, Simon!

Simon Peter.—Oh, happy Judas!

The Apostles.—He hanged himself! Thaddeus brought us word. His body's in the wilderness.

Simon Peter.—Happy, indeed, is he! He's through—but I, Simon Peter, the rock, I, the rock, must live—live in the presence of my lie—live in the hearing of my filthy tongue—live in the knowledge of my hollow bravery!

The Apostles.—Oh, brother, Simon Peter, brother, what speech is this! We chide thee not!

Simon Peter.—Ye! Who cares for thee? I fear not thy rebuke. Ye are cowards like myself!—Ah, Jesus, Master, could these tears, tears of a poor weak wretch, poorer than any leper thou hast healed—could these hot tears but flood away the lies—wash the black lies—Men, Andrew, Matthew, Philip, James!

The Apostles.—Speak—Peter, we hear thee!

Simon Peter.—Some way I feel my strength again; come with me to the palace: come and we'll set the Master free!

The Apostles.—Nay, Simon, not a step, stay where we are secure.

Simon Peter.—I go alone, then! I am going back to Jesus! I'm going to recall my lies! I'm going to the Master's side! I'm going to tell them—soldiers—Pilate—Caiaphas—Annas—mob and all—that I am not afraid of them! And Cæsar too—that, vile and mean and miserable as I am—I'm **Jesus Christ's disciple!**

THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT

A woman in the city which was a sinner when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping and began to wash His feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.

THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT

IT was a brave thing to do. She was a woman of the street, they say, and she had made her way through the crowd into the Presence. She paid no attention to the servants who would have barred her way. There was a certain sense of command that stayed the hands of them who would have held her back. Even Simon himself, the rich Pharisee, in whose house Jesus was dining, felt himself powerless to order her away. There was something about her as Simon beheld her standing in his doorway that filled him with awe. So beautiful she was as she paused upon the threshold. Her black hair fell in lavish tresses over her shoulders. She had hurried to find Jesus, and her face was full of color.

She had something she wanted to give to the Nazarene: it was her total wealth—the last thing she had left in her shabby room.

Everything else had been sold. Her own worthless life would soon pay the last price: but she had clung with a kind of passion to the little box of ointment. It had come from far. It was costly. It was rich with tender memories. What wonder then that she pressed it tightly to herself as she stood within the doorway of Simon's house.

She was going to give it away. She was going to empty its precious contents upon the Master's head. She was going to bestow her all upon Him. He had come into her life. She had heard Him speak, quite by chance, to Nicodemus. She had witnessed some of His wonderful works. Although she were the furthest removed from Him, she had felt the magic charm of His Life and an indefinable longing to be like Him. That was no doubt impossible.

What was not impossible, however, was for her to pay Jesus her last tribute and there she stood with her treasure. She had sought His presence before but He was always surrounded by multitudes. It was the multitude now that told her where He was—the street was black with people.

Into the house she pushed her way. It mattered not whose house it was and of what sort she was. The crowd fell away before her. She reached the door. She paused a moment to make sure that Jesus was there, and then, entering the room, walked directly to the place where He was sitting and knelt at His feet.

THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT

The Woman.—Jesus—Lover of my soul,
forgive me.

Jesus.—Forgive thee? What hast thou
done?

The Woman.—Thou knowest, Lord.

Jesus.—Thy presence here? These tears of
thine? The ointment on my feet? There
is no guilt in that—except thy lavish gift
of precious price.

The Woman.—Ah, Master, that is freely
thine. My life, Master, forgive my life.

Jesus.—Hast thy life troubled thee?

The Woman.—Oh, 'tis black with sin, black,
Master, like the clouds that come with the
storm from Galilee, black like the skin
of Simon's slave, black like the bears of
Libanus!

Jesus.—Why hast thou come to me, my
child?

The Woman.—Whom else? I may not pass
into the Synagogue. The women scorn
me and the men make laughter of me.

But yesterday I went to pray and the priest
bade me wail out my sins upon the street!
Jesus.—God may be found upon the street,
my daughter.

The Woman.—Ay, Galilean, but not by me!
God would not know me. He would not
hear my pleading. He would not listen to
my prayer. I call to God and some man
thrusts his leering face upon me! I call to
God and hear the mockery of my mates!
I call to God and men's hands stop my
mouth!

Jesus.—Men cannot stop thy voice from
reaching God.

The Woman.—Nay, but they can and do.
But, Master, they dare not stop me as I
come to Thee. See, Master, see, I came
upon Thee here and no one barred the
way and no one bade me stop from Thee.
I told the servant that I wanted Thee.
Give me my life again, Jesus.

Jesus.—Thy life again, my daughter?

The Woman.—Ay, as Thou gavest it to the
boy of Nain! I saw Thee, Rabbi, I saw
Thee as Thou touched his lifeless body! I
heard Thee as Thou call'dst him to his

feet, I looked upon Thee as Thou **re-**
stor'dst him to his mother. Ah, Jesus, my
Lord, give me my life again!

Jesus.—How dost thou mean—thy life
again? That boy was dead.

The Woman.—Yea, and Thou broughtest
his spirit back once more, and Thou canst
bring my spirit back to me—for I am
dead! My life blood flows within my
body, true: but sin hath worn my heart
and soul to shreds. Each thought of mine
is stained with sin, and every impulse
tainted, and every motive hath its streak
of black, and every inward look doth bring
back sin. Give me my life again!

Jesus.—Thou askest a hard thing of me, my
child.

The Woman.—But, Man of Nazareth—the
boy of Nain!

Jesus.—My daughter, 'tis an easy thing to
give back life like that. That kind of
death is only God's affection, the sweet
withdrawal of the soul He gave, the call-
ing home of that He loves the most, the
shifting of the plan of life—but sin, ah,
child, it shackles and it clamps, it **wears**

away the flesh, it leaves no spot for life, no shrine for soul, it kills and strips of every home for breath to come again.

The Woman.—'Tis worse than death then, Master? And I cannot live again? And Thou hast no power? Nay, Thou hast power, though Thou knowest not! I've heard Thee, Master, ever since they called Thee Lamb of God! I've been in every crowd that's followed Thee, have heard Thee speak upon the hill and street. Didst Thou not say New Birth to Nicodemus? Since first I heard Thy voice I have not sinned. I have not sinned the way of baser life. Thy very words have made me hate my past, and turn upon it like the beast I knew and rend the heart within me and tear the vitals of my sin away.—Forgive the tears that fall upon Thy feet: see how I wipe them with my hair.

When Thou didst give back the boy of Nain, the truth of life methought did flood upon me. I saw myself restored from death to life again if I could but have one word with Thee: if only I could ask Thee to forgive—Rabbi, Thou canst not send

me back! I will not go into the past! Thou hast already drawn me out from thence. These men I fear not nor the women more. I have been born again! I know that Thou canst breathe magic into the heart, that Thou canst charm the soul again, that Thou canst touch all human life, and make the spirit leap once more into the body that was dead in sin. Canst Thou not, Rabbi?

Jesus.—Daughter of mine, thou comest near the hidden secret of the life divine.

The Woman.—Master, forgive me: give me back my life again. 'Tis Thee I ask because 'tis Thee Whom I have sinned against. Look, Jesus! see the ointment here! It's very precious. Take it for Thyself—nay, take it—then I pour it on Thy feet. I want it not—only forgiveness—and my life unstained: only my soul again: only to follow in the multitude.

Jesus.—Forgiven are thy sins, my child.

The Woman.—Ah, then I live once more? And I am spotless too? And am I just as good as anyone? Dost Thy forgive-

ness take away the dross and make me as the child I used to be?

Jesus.—My daughter, thou art whole again and white and pure!

The Woman.—I knew Thee, Master, and I know the truth. I know the dead Thou dost restore to life are but the symbol of a deadlier death from which Thou canst reclaim. I see we have no need to fear the grave but only that destruction of the soul which sin doth work. Oh, blessed is my life from this day forth! 'Tis in Thy keeping, for Thy work, dear Lord! I'll tell the worth of Thy redeeming strength and show the folk of Israel Thy power! I'll slave for Thee as only woman can! Yea, for I live once more!

Jesus.—My child, thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace. And come—take up thy cross and follow Me!

THE SILVER PIECES

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself.

THE SILVER PIECES

JUDAS was afraid to live. There was no attractiveness to life—no joy in the thought of going on for the rest of his three-score years and ten face to face with his treachery. To him there was but one thing left to do. He had failed in everything. Matters had not righted themselves as Judas thought they would.

The one thing in which he had not failed was in the leading of the mob into Gethsemane. He knew the way and the hour well.

After Gethsemane Judas would have changed events—but there again he failed. Jesus had not established His Kingdom. Jesus had not ascended His Messianic throne. Israel had not triumphed. The hour when the Jews should master the hated Romans had not struck. Judas had not wakened and found himself welcomed as a prince.

How keen in Judas' mind had been the thought of kingship. How full his heart had been of dreams of the freedom of his people. Nothing but poverty had Judas ever known. From youth he had seen the slavery and oppression of his countrymen. He longed in some way to set them free. Only the Messiah, Judas knew, could set his people free. Throughout his youth, into his manhood Judas hoped for the Messiah. At his work, in his walks, at all his tasks Judas prayed for the Messiah—'till one day Judas heard the Voice.

Rumors of Jesus reached the ears of Judas. Tales of wondrous deeds—fragments of strange sayings were told Iscariot. Something in the startling stories that were floating about Palestine wakened a response in Judas' soul. What if it were the Messiah!

Over the hills the son of Kerioth made his journey—bent on beholding Jesus' face; intent on hearing Jesus speak. Perhaps it was this eagerness, this burning desire, this passionate wish to serve his people which Jesus detected in Judas that caused Jesus to welcome Judas as His disciple.

In Jesus Iscariot recognized the Messiah: he saw a Leader who could liberate his nation. As his knowledge of Him grew, so grew the disciple's certainty.

Now the thing was done. His enemies had Him prisoner. But the Messiah had not asserted Himself.

Judas' treachery had failed to bring any victory. His act had been powerless. The silver in his hand was powerless. His deeply studied, carefully administered plans had proved powerless. This whole method, Judas had begun to suspect, was futile.

And now there came flooding over Judas the memories of the three sweet years of fellowship, fellowship which had made the disciple feel so masterful. Of course, Jesus was the Messiah! Let me have more of that companionship, Judas thought, and we can prove it.

So Judas went to buy the Saviour back. He returned with the silver to the Temple. He was too late. Bound and bleeding, tortured and taunted, Jesus had been carried off to Golgotha!

They of the Temple laughed in Judas'

face. With shouts of derision they bade him begone. Infuriated, enraged, murderous with remorse, the disciple hurled the silver pieces in their leering faces and fled away. Near the gate of the city he met a woman hurrying toward the Temple. She passed him, but something about his manner made her look back at him. She recognized Judas and hastened toward him. Judas knew her. It was the woman which had been a sinner.

THE SILVER PIECES

The Woman.—Ah, Iscariot——

Judas Iscariot.—Out of my way, thou wench!

The Woman.—Nay, Judas, I would have news of thee.

Judas.—Out of my way, thou woman of the street!

The Woman.—Why, no, apostle, 'tis the Master whom I seek. Oh, do not strike me! What have I done to thee——

Judas.—Strike thee? I'll kill thee if thou speak'st a word!

The Woman.—Oh, Judas, thou wilt not Tell me of Him. Alone of the disciples, thee I find. The rest have fled, Simon and James and John. I seek for news of Him: His Mother urged me to. I come from her, where I have been these last drear, dreadful days.

Judas.—His Mother—Mary? Tell her His work is done——

The Woman.—Done, Iscariot? Have they

crowned Him King? I knew they would: I felt the people's joy. Hath Pilate and the Synagogue received Him well——?

Judas.—Jehovah! stop thy childish prattle:—let me be——

The Woman.—Nay, Judas, I must tell the Virgin all—all the triumph and the glory. Where is the blest Redeemer now? Stop! Judas! stop, thou'rt choking me——

Judas.—Then wilt thou cease thy idle talk and get thee from my sight—Go and tell Mary that she'll find her Son all crowned with bloody thorns and reigning from a throne on Golgatha——

The Woman.—Iscariot! Iscariot!

Judas.—Away from me——

The Woman.—Iscariot, Judas, nay, thou mayst kill me but tell me where Jesus is! Yea, strike, strike, thou canst not shake me off; tell me where Jesus is and I will go to Him. Hast thou abandoned Him? Tell me, what hast thou done to Him?

Judas.—Well, go, He needs thee. Thou'l^t find Him in the guard room. Go and cry to Him and tell Him to use His power. Tell Him that Judas said to try His

strength! Tell Him that Judas said to bring them to their knees just as He brought the blind man and the lepers and the dumb! Tell Him that Judas said upon His way to death——

The Woman.—Death, Judas?

Judas.—Ay, death! Tell Him to call the armies of the Seraphim! Tell Him that Judas wished Him well, and say that not one piece of all the silver profits me. I threw it from me—heard it ring upon the pavement, saw it roll about their feet——

The Woman.—Judas, I pray thee let me know clearly what thou sayst: I cannot understand thy speech—the silver—the pavement—it rolled about their feet! What silver, Judas? What pave, whose feet? Thy words are like one drunken.

Judas.—And so are thine, harlot——

The Woman.—Stop! I am not—since first I looked upon the face of Christ——

Judas.—Oh, well, perhaps——

The Woman.—What were thy words?

Judas.—I said I threw it from me—the silver—the silver which they gave me for His body.

The Woman.—Jehovah! His body—His body! Messiah's?—

Judas.—Ay, Messiah's, wench! I sold Him—understand? Am I clear now? This is no frenzy. I sold Him! I told them for the money—thirty foul pieces—ten more than our fathers got for Joseph in the olden day—I told them that I'd take them to His hiding place. I did. They caught Him there. We came upon Him in Gethsemane—and seized Him as He rose from prayer!

The Woman.—Iscariot! Thou didst not lay thy hand upon Him? They did not dare to touch Him? To lay their filthy hands on Him would bring them punishment from Heaven!

Judas.—So thought I, woman, but He suffered it. Though, at the first, a stunning light from out His eyes blinded and staggered them—

The Woman.—How did they know which one was He at first? 'Twas dark. Were there not others there?

Judas.—The others! Tush, they were asleep. But to make sure—that they

might know—I kissed Him! The kiss still trembles on me; my lips yet feel the softness of his cheek, the perfume of His breath.

The Woman.—Thou kiss'dst the Master, Judas, and they seized Him! Thou ledst them to the Garden—Thou didst this thing for money! Man, I am bewildered, I cannot grasp the thing which thou hast done! The kiss—the mob—the soldiers—I see: they came, thou ledst them to their King. Good art Thou, Judas!

Judas.—Thou fool, I speak as one about to die! My death will come 'fore His—but He will die. God will not save Him! He will not ask an angel. I heard His prayer—He drained the chalice to its bitterest drop—drinking the will of God.

The Woman.—They will not kill Him, Judas—

Judas.—Ay, that they will unless He reach out into His deep resources and let them feel His strength! If He but will, He can. He is Messiah but I cannot fathom Him. He is the Son of God—though how, I cannot tell. I know He is but cannot under-

stand. If I were He, I'd change the whole world's face: I'd call down lightning on the mob: I'd strike off Cæsar from his throne: I'd cleanse the world of every trace of vice: I'd smite with death at once such men as me! Methought that's what He'd do when soldiers came: that then He'd bring His kingdom to the front: that then He'd let the people make Him King and put the golden crown upon His head! Thou art a Gentile, woman. Thou knowest not the chosen people's dream—that one day He will come with power from God and bear the nation to her victory, e'en as she was of old: that we, the Jews, the race that's dear to God, will trample with our feet the neck of Rome—toss their vile carcasses to starving dogs!

Who hath more power than this Nazarene? Who hath more beauty and more marks of God? When have earth's men beheld more works divine?—I tell thee, woman, He's Messiah!

The Woman.—Why hast done thy wickedness, then, Judas? Why in thy baseness hast thou lost Him——?

Judas.—Ah, I am curst, curst by my dream: curst by my brethren's poverty: curst by my people's hope: curst by my certainty! As sure as I shall never see another morn, He is the Son of God—Christ, the anointed of our race! All that I strove to do was make Him King—King to the world as He was King to me. If I could only bring the peril to Him, could only bring Him face to face with death, then would His revelation come! Fool that I am, what doth He care for death—no peril is there in the world to Him! He'll go to death before He'll take His throne by force, by force of any Godhead or Divinity! He wants the throne just by the love of men. He seeks to rule just in the hearts of men. The sceptre which He'd sway upon the world is His own kindly precious life.

The Woman.—Iscariot, come, let's seek for Him!

Judas.—Nay—I have no longer any part with Him. The only thing that I can do is die! It hardly seemeth more than yesterday that in the solitudes of Kerioth, I heard His voice. It came upon the breeze

from Galilee: came at the moment of my deep despair: came in the hour of want and need: came when the poor were crying after help. I heard the Voice as coming down from heaven—speaking when my heart was full of pain—calling to the more abundant life just when my life was empty! Voice of a mother to her child—I could not choose but hear and follow. Voice and desire led straight to Him—and Him I found. And this black deed that I have done today was my blind way of making Jesus King! I did it for ye all and for my folk of Kerioth!

The Woman.—Ah me, Iscariot—how would it ever be that evil could give birth to good—that in the matrix of unrighteousness should grow the bones of any righteous deed? Come with me to His side—

Judas.—Nay, never more! I've earned my death, and go to take it. Thou'l see me not again! But, woman, if thou goest near the temple, look for a piece of silver, stained with blood! I hurled the handful in their very faces! I made them wince: it cut and drew the blood! And if thou

seest the Master once again, say that I could not live an hour more to taint the air with my foul breath—and say I love Him and believe Him: say I know Him for the King: say the kiss I gave Him strengthens me for death! I do not fear the end! Stand from my path—

The Woman.—Farewell, Iscariot!

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

*He went to Pilate and begged the body of
Jesus.*

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

PONTIUS PILATE had washed his hands of the whole matter of the crucifixion of Jesus. The people had seen him do it: it had been a public act. That done, responsibility and guilt eliminated, the rest might take care of itself. It did. They bore the Nazarene away and nailed Him to the Cross. There He died.

Not many saw Jesus die. A few soldiers, a little band of loving companions, His mother: not many more. The rabble had wearied of its sport and gone back to the city.

Among the watchers was Joseph of Arimathea. He was rich and not without influence in Jerusalem. He had been unable to prevent the crucifixion, but he had made no attempt to conceal his loyalty. Many a time he had urged Jesus to make His home with him. He would have gone with Jesus to a place of safety.

What honor Joseph could not do for

Jesus in His life, he would do in His days of death. He was rich. Jesus was poor. Mary had nothing. The apostles could not be found.

Joseph's own sepulchre had just been completed. He had had it hewn out for himself when he should die. No body had been laid within it. Here was one of Joseph's homes which Jesus could have.

With ability, therefore, Joseph took command of the situation. He alone appears to have been able to deal with it. Three obstacles confronted him—Pontius Pilate, the Jewish law, the vandals who might steal the body. Joseph feared only the vandals. He loathed Pilate. To Pilate, however, Joseph hastened, determined that the governor should grant his request.

He waived all ceremony, and walked boldly into Pilate's presence.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

Joseph of Arimathea.—I come to beg the body of my Lord the King——

Pontius Pilate.—The King? What king?—
Joseph.—The King of all the sons of men——

Pontius Pilate.—I know no king whose body lies in my domain——

Joseph.—Indeed thou dost; a few brief hours agone thou gav'st Him to the people for their sport——

Pontius Pilate.—Thou meanest one called Jesus?

Joseph.—Ay, Pilate—Jesus called Christ, Divine One out of Nazareth!

Pontius Pilate.—That dreamer Man—the One who had a kingdom—who made me laugh this morn about His kingdom of another world? What wouldest thou of me?

Joseph.—I ask His body, His body from the Cross. 'Tis sacred to me and to many more——

Pontius Pilate.—Sacred? Ha—only a poor thin carcass of a man who lived on truth! Take it, go pick it out among the thieves! I have no care for it!

Joseph.—No care for it—for Him? No care for thine own soul, thou sayest! Pilate, methinks before another sun thou'l kneel before the empty Cross praying to blood spots on it! Thou'l feel the shaking of thy soul, the gnawing of thy empty heart and hear the wail of thy whipped, starving conscience—

Pontius Pilate.—Joseph—thou speakest to the governor!

Joseph.—Never—thou governest nothing! Thou canst not govern the little infant of thy own mind—thou art not bigger than the childish whim of beggars! What wast thy judgment of the Galilean?

Pontius Pilate.—He was a guilty wretch!

Joseph.—Thou liest, Pilate—I heard thee call Him innocent. Once, twice, thrice thou call'dst Him innocent. I heard thine own foul tongue say there was no guilt in Him, thy base black lips utter His faultlessness—

Pontius Pilate.—Silence! I'll order thy arrest!

Joseph.—Yea, my arrest! Mayhap another cross. I fear thee not! Take all my gold and silver from me. I am no Pontius Pilate, washer of hands, frightened at cry of voice, timid of speech to Cæsar! What could they say to Cæsar of thee that Cæsar doth not already know. Tell him, perhaps, thou art a craven, a coward, a cringing, crawling cur?—He knoweth it! But for the sacred One thou nailedst to the Cross, thy life had paid the forfeit for thy crime!

Pontius Pilate.—Joseph, I killed Him not—the High Priests did it—the rabble did it—the scribes and doctors of the law! I bade them clearly see it was not I!

Joseph.—Yea, bade them—and I heard thy trembling words, the grumble of some frightened dog—

Pontius Pilate.—It was not I! They took the blame. Mine ear still holds the promise which they made to me: His blood be on us and our children! Thou seest it was not I, my hands are clean—

Joseph.—God of the Prophets! Thy hands are clean! Clean like the feet of swine which wallow in the mire, clean like the hands of them who murder in the night, clean like the flesh of him who rots in leprosy, clean like the mind that steeps itself in filth—

Pontius Pilate.—Get thee from the palace——!

Joseph.—Not one step, Pilate, not till thou cryest from thy knees upon the stones to Him thou slayedst—not till thou wailest to Him, Pity me—not till thou moanest to Him to forgive, Who canst forgive the foulest sin!

Pontius Pilate.—Thou art as much beside thyself as was the One thou callest King!

Joseph.—Beside myself, because of thy base deed, thy sin, thy rank unrighteousness! Thou art the leader of this province; in thee men see the beauty of the law, its majesty and grace. To thee we look for safety for our own and children's lives, our honor and our good report. What hast thou done for beauty, majesty, and grace of law, for Cæsar and my poor en-

slaved race? Defiled, polluted, slain them on the godless altar of thy cowardice! Out of thy leprous lips thy judgment cometh! Innocent He was, and without guile and stain! King of the Truth thy soul can never sense: Messiah of a Kingdom barred to thee—because a Kingdom of the pure and sweet and clean! Pilate, thou knewest—

Pontius Pilate.—Joseph, 'twas thine own people killed Him! I washed my hands of Him! I knew he had no guilt!

Joseph.—My people killed the Nazarene? —My poor, deluded people—the people whom He healed and cleansed—the people who adored Him—to whose sight He brought the rich realm of their lives, the depths all unexplored, the length and breadth and height they never dreamed—they kill Him? Oh, Pilate, only a ragged fringe, some hangers-on, tricked by the envy of a priest or two! Thou art the man who slew Him—thou in whose hands His freedom lay—thou as the ruler of this realm—thou as the guardian of Roman law—thou art the man, traitor more base

than Judas, Gentile, heathen, lecherous dog! Washedst thy hands of Jesus? Yea, washedst the filth into thy shrivelled soul, washedst away all trace of any master except thy fear, washedst away all marks of kingship, washedst away all hope of any good!

Pontius Pilate.—Joseph, I will not suffer thee to speak these things!

Joseph.—Nay, but thou shallst—I tell thee that the washing of thy hands carried away the touch of thy Redeemer! Thou never wast so near the glorious Truth as when thou stoodest face to face with Jesus and felt the thrill of Faith and His true Kingship, the thrall of Truth and His immortal Spirit—as when thou heardst the divine speech of His silence and look'dst into His pitying, piercing eyes! Pilate, 'twas God thou look'dst upon—God in the likeness of a sinless Man, of One who loved and labored for us all, Bringer of life and light to blind and heartless men like me! The days He walked within thy realm have wrought transfiguration. Mercy and truth have kissed this holy land

and all thy folk hath felt the charm of Heaven. Him thou hast slain—thy Master and thy God, the One thou knewest innocent and washed from off thy hands! I go now, Pilate, for His body, His body which shall vivify the tomb, His body which ere many hours shall clear the mystery of human death—

Pontius Pilate.—Joseph, Joseph, my friend! —Nay, Joseph, be my friend, be friend to faithless Pilate, faithless to law and righteousness and man. Be friend to me for His sake whom thou callest God. I felt it all the time He stood in the Prætorium. His majesty, His strength, His glory, might, dominion. I saw it all—but only heard the name of Cæsar—the lust of earthly things doth drive one so! Friend, let me go with thee! Let us take soldiers and we'll force the priests and mocking mob to kneel with me and kiss the bleeding feet of Jesus! I'll bathe my head and hands within His blood—these hands that washed in water shall lave themselves in blood! Perchance in days to come, He of the Cross may look upon my soul and see

the stain of His own precious Blood! He may redeem it then—God knoweth! Alas, wretched, and weak, and worthless that I am! Murderer of the Man of Galilee! Come, Joseph, come—I beg thee—take me to the Cross!

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